

## 2003 FIRE CHRONOLOGY

### JANUARY

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 0

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 0

Total Acres – 0

**Weather:** January was a rather wet month, though not as wet as December. What really set the month apart, however, were the mild temperatures. The entire state was well above normal, due to persistent flow of air from the southwest, bringing mild, fairly wet conditions to the entire state. Freezing levels were very high. As a result, much of the mountain snowpack melted, bringing the statewide average down to about 50% of normal.

**Jim Brown** announces his resignation as State Forester and 36 years with the Oregon Department of Forestry. Jim accepted a new position of Natural Resource Policy Director to Governor Ted Kulongoski. Jim's assignment is to help the administration establish priorities for natural resources and develop systems and mechanisms for addressing the challenges facing natural resource agencies and industries in the coming four-year term.

No fires this month.

### FEBRUARY

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 6

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 6

Total Acres – 5.89

**Weather:** February was dry in most of Oregon, with the exception of northeastern counties. Temperatures overall were near normal. The storms of February did not bring any substantial increase to the mountain snowpack, in fact all basins except the Umatilla, Hood River and Willamette showed a decrease in the snowpack percentages from last month.

### MARCH

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 7

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires - 7

Total Acres – 6.14

**Weather:** March was very wet with plenty of rainy days. A number of locations set new records for most rainy days in March. The wet conditions helped make up for a rather disappointing snow pack.

**Pacific Northwest National Incident Management Team 2** is used for some odd assignments. Typically large wildfires, this specialized group worked Ground Zero after 9/11, more recently, they received a call from NASA. A recent assignment to Texas ranks as the most unusual for Mike Ferris of the PNW National Incident Management Team from Oregon and Washington that

were sent to the Lone Star State for space shuttle debris. Mike said, 'We're used to being outdoors; we're field-going people, we understand the elements and the terrain and exactly what we're looking for.' Approximately 56 fire crews from across the nation were scouring the Columbia debris path. In the first two days on the job, they found more pieces than NASA's small force was able to collect in two weeks.

## APRIL

### MONTH:

Lightning – 1

Human Caused – 9

### YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires - 10

Total Acres – 7.67

**Weather:** For the second month in a row, Oregon 'enjoyed' a very wet month, with an unusually large number of rainy days. In many locations, the March-April period set records for most wet days.

**Marvin Brown of Maryland** was selected as the new Oregon State Forester by the Board of Forestry. The former Missouri State Forester fills a vacancy left by Jim Brown (no relation), who resigned earlier this year to become Governor Ted Kulongoski's chief natural resource policy advisor. Currently director of private forestland management with the American Forest and Paper Association in Washington, D.C., Brown served as State Forester of Missouri from 1992 to 1999. He worked for Willamette Industries from 1999 to 2002 as director of forest policy, stationed in Portland, Oregon, and also Ft. Mills, South Carolina.

## MAY

### MONTH:

Lightning – 10

Human Caused – 39

### YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 49

Total Acres – 179.88

**Weather:** The first half of May was a continuation of March-April: wet and cool. Things changed significantly in the middle of the month, however, and the second half of the month was much warmer and drier than the first.

**Gov. Ted Kulongoski has proclaimed May 4-10, 2003 to be Wildfire Prevention Week in Oregon.** The announcement came as Oregonians began bracing themselves for the coming fire season. They have reason to be concerned: a million acres burned in 2002, making it one of the worst years for wildfire in the state's history. While last summer's largest fires were triggered by lightning, people have historically played a major role in wildfire starts. In his proclamation, Gov. Kulongoski noted that in a typical year, "two-thirds of wildfires in Oregon are human caused and are therefore preventable." The Governor said, "Wildfires increasingly threaten homes and communities. There is a vital need to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires through information, education and motivation." In 2002, 25 homes were destroyed by wildfire across Oregon, along with scores of barns, shops, garages and other outbuildings.

**Meteorologists** can predict many of the conditions that lead to forest fires – but there is always a wild card, says Mike Ziolk, ODF meteorology manager. Rain can evaporate before it hits the ground, but there are other characteristics of a thunderstorm, mainly the lightning. It's actually

caused when high pressure over the Rocky Mountains and over the southwestern U.S. just shifts, and that causes the airflow from the desert Southwest to move up over Oregon. Without rain to quench its power, lightning can trigger a firestorm. The temperature in a lightning bolt is anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit. So there's a lot of heat to be available to ignite dry forest fuels.

## **JUNE**

MONTH:

Lightning – 20

Human Caused – 174

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 194

Total Acres – 1,513.74

**Weather:** June was dry and rather warm. There were several heat waves. Summer arrived in Oregon.

**100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Oregon's deadliest weather event, Heppner 1903.** Many farmers in Oregon east of the Cascades were worried about water conditions during the late spring of 1903. Very low precipitation totals in April and May had left the soil dry and began to threaten crops. The agricultural report for May 25<sup>th</sup> stated 'ranges drying up, and more rain needed in eastern and southern Oregon. Wheat backward and becoming weedy. . . corn, sugar beets, field onions and gardens making very slow growth.' Dry and warm weather continued, although local showers brought some relief. The June 8<sup>th</sup> report included a single sentence about water conditions: 'Spring wheat and forage plants deteriorating on account of the drought.' Little wonder, then, that gathering clouds on the afternoon of the June 14<sup>th</sup> were welcomed by the residents, many of them dry-land farmers whose economic survival depended on summer rains. The population of Heppner in 1903 was about 1,400. As storm clouds gathered over the Columbia Plateau on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>, they seemed to congregate near the slopes of the Blue Mountains just south of Heppner. They grew darker and darker. Thunder was heard. Abruptly, a massive (and deadly) hailstorm began. A U.S. Geological Survey agent later reported: Some of the hail stones are said to have measure 1 ¼ inches in diameter. . . A grim evidence of the amount of hail that fell is that, while most of the bodies being recovered on the fifth day were already badly decomposed, one was occasionally found almost perfectly preserved in a large drift of hail. Nearly all the hail was of clear ice and, unlike the usual hailstones, which are of a more opaque ice, being built up from a nucleus in successive layers. As bad as the hailstorm was, things quickly grew worse. Heavy rain inundated the slopes of the Blues and the upper parts of the valley. Most of the rain fell in areas beyond any measurement gauges, but later reports estimated that an average of 1.5 inches fell over an area of 20-square miles, most of it in a short period of time. A wall of water surged downstream; in many places the first surge of water coincided with the peak depth. Eyewitness reports of a 'wave' of water from 15 to 50 feet high. The water arrived so suddenly that residents were taken almost completely by surprise. The first notice that the people in the business district had of the flood was when a two-story residence lefts its foundation, floated across the street and crashed into some wooden buildings. Poplar trees over two feet in diameter snapped off like cornstalks. A 70 year old man stayed in his home until everything was gone but the roof. He rode the current atop the roof for almost two miles, saving the life of another resident by pulling him onto the roof as he floated by. About one-third of Heppner was destroyed, more than 200 people died, more than 150 residences were destroyed. In the days following the flood, many remarkable stories were told as residents began to clean up, bury the dead, and rebuild their town.

Effective June 1<sup>st</sup>, Klamath-Lake District, Walker Range District, and Prineville and Sister Units of Central Oregon District enter Fire Season 2003. Conditions of fire hazard now exist and warrant the designation of fire season. Southwest Oregon District entered fire season on June 6<sup>th</sup>. Western Lane District, Eastern Lane Unit of the Cascade District and Douglas Forest Protection Association entered fire season on Jun 9<sup>th</sup>. The Dalles Unit of COD entered June 16<sup>th</sup>. John Day Unit of COD entered fire season on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Northeast Oregon District entered fire season on the 25<sup>th</sup>; Molalla, Santiam and Sweet Home Units of the Cascade District, Northwest Oregon District and West Oregon District on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Mid-Willamette Fire School** trained 175 firefighters this month. Students learned how to use all kinds of tools from hand tools to fire engines and all the protective equipment needed. Training occurs both inside and outside the classroom. On the last day of training there was a live-fire exercise so they could get a hands-on training. They were working in an area that was logged and had slashpiles stacked up. The students camped in a schoolyard in their tents and sleeping bags, trying to simulate fire camp as much as possible, including standing to eat their meals and sack lunches. This is a multi-agency effort with representatives from USFS, BLM, BIA, ODF, and other federal and state agencies working together to train wildland firefighters.

**Savorski Slopover Fire** near Falls City burned 376 acres on the 4th. The fire was an escaped slashburn, it burned mainly on Boise lands in reprod timber and a small parcel of BLM land.

The **Sulphur Fire** began on the 27<sup>th</sup>, burning a total of 650 acres in West Lane District, five miles SE of Mapleton. This was an equipment use caused fire.

**The Daisy Hill Road Fire** began on the 29<sup>th</sup>, one mile west of Cave Junction burning 120 acres in grass and brush. One home, two garages and one outbuilding were destroyed. The fire was a juvenile caused fire.

**The Davis Fire**, 18 miles west of LaPine, burned 17,000 acres of lodgepole pine. Salem Coordination Center assisted in the effort by filling orders for overhead personnel for this federal fire. Central Oregon Interagency Incident Management Team established an incident command post at the LaPine High School; cooperators included Walker Range Forest Protection Association, ODF, BLM, and USFS. This was a miscellaneous caused fire.

## **JULY**

### **MONTH:**

Lightning – 133

Human Caused – 440

### **YEAR-TO-DATE:**

Total Fires – 573

Total Acres – 7,764.29

**Weather:** July saw a continuation of the dry and warm which began in June. A major heat wave, with many daily record temperatures, occurred late in the month.

**Mary Ellen Holly** was selected as the new President of Keep Oregon Green. Mary Ellen began her career with the U.S. Forest Service as a fire prevention specialist on the Willamette National Forest. She served two years in Washington, D.C. as the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention Officer, including functioning as the FS liaison to the IMT that planned and implemented

Smokey's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1994. She served as Deputy Fire Marshall in Eugene. Mary Ellen left a position as the fire prevention specialist/fire marshal for Central Lyon County in Dayton, Nevada to come to KOG.

**Milepost 245** burned 50 acres of state protected land for a total of 129 acres on the 2nd. The railroad caused fire burned 20 miles east of Pendleton in Meacham Canyon. The fire burned grass, brush and a very small amount of timber on both USFS and ODF lands.

**Powell Creek Fire**, 13 miles south of Grants Pass, burned 262 acres on the 7th. The ODF-managed fire on BLM land burned in an urban interface area near the small community of Williams. About 30 to 40 homes on three roads were evacuated. The fire was caused by equipment use.

**Jenkins Cabin Fire** near Mt. Vernon in Central Oregon burned 772 acres on the 12th. ODF IMT 1 was dispatched to assist in the fire fighting efforts; command center was located at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day. No structures were threatened from the debris caused fire. Cooperators on the fire included ODF, USFS, Mt. Vernon Rural Fire Protection Dist., Grant County Sheriff's Office, and John Day Police.

**Clark Creek Fire**, ten miles northeast of Lowell burned 4,964 acres. The fire burned through the Bedrock Campground, but did not destroy it. Older Douglas-fir trees on the site did not ignite. A federal incident management team was in charge of the fire. The fire burned in steep, rocky terrain making use of air support critical. The estimated cost of fighting the two-week old fire is \$8.5 million. Weyerhaeuser was very helpful in developing numerous dipping sites for helicopters near the north flank of the fire, where natural water sites are scarce. They strung them out on Weyerhaeuser lands a few miles north of burnout operations, giving helicopters a short turnaround time.

**Frog Hollow**, eight miles east of Mitchell in Central Oregon burned 732 acres. The lightning caused fire smoldered undetected for several days before exploding the afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup>. Incident Management Team Three was dispatched to the fire. District forces and crews endured the 100+ degree temperatures to battle the fire.

**Abiqua Fire**, seven miles east of Silverton, burned 97 acres of second growth timber and brush. The fire started from an abandoned structure.

**Air Tanker Opertion:** Oregon Department of Forestry staged aircraft and crew from the State of Alaska at the USFS Air Tanker Base in Medford, Oregon during fire season. The aircraft was requested from Alaska under the Northwest Compact Act. The Air Tanker (DC6-B) and ASM/Lead Plane (PC-7) were available to fly anywhere in Oregon on both State and Federal fires through interagency coordination. The 2003 fire season was predicted to be severe due to the drought of the past several years. The increased fire load and the possible shortage of USFS airtankers and lead planes prompted the Oregon Department of Forestry to procure an airtanker and lead plane support from the State of Alaska under the Northwest Compact Act. Oregon arranged to acquire up to one DC6-B, Tanker 51 and Tanker 46, altered the Oregon duty, along with a State of Alaska, Aerial Supervision Module (ASM)/Leadplane, a Palatus PC7 aircraft. The

funding for the air tanker and ASM was granted to ODF under a special appropriation from the Oregon State Legislature. The air tankers and crew were owned by Conair Group of Canada under contract to the State of Alaska. The PC7 ASM. Lead plane and crew is owned by the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry. During fire season 2003, the air tanker operation flew on 15 fires, nine of those fires were unmanned; they dumped 77,000 gallons (at 2,045 gal/load) of water on the fires.

## AUGUST

### MONTH:

Lightning – 273

Human Caused – 592

### YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 865

Total Acres – 6,668.42

**Weather:** August was another warm and dry month, but not much as July had been. Most temperatures statewide were above normal, but only by a few degrees.

**Extensive lightning** occurred the evening of Aug. 4<sup>th</sup> and early morning on the 5<sup>th</sup> throughout most of the state, resulting in a total of 9,234 lightning strikes impacting all 36 counties in Oregon. From midnight on the 4<sup>th</sup> to midnight on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Salem Coordination Center recorded 11,493 lightning strikes across the state. A contingency move-up of engines from SOA and NWOA to Prineville and John Day; all districts conducted Initial Attack action as fires were detected. There was some moisture accompanying the storms, but some areas had none.

**McKay Fire**, ten miles southeast of McKay Reservoir in the NEO District burned 405 acres of grass and brush on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The lightning caused fire began on the 6<sup>th</sup>; Pendleton Unit managed the fire.

**Hell's Half Acre Fire**, nine miles SE of Fossil, began on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Incident Management Team Two was mobilized. The fire burned in logged-over timbered, dry grasses and heavy concentration of fuel. Steep slopes and constantly changing winds made this fire difficult to control. Land is owned by 'Three Valley Ranches' and is part of the old Kinzua tract, burning 465 acres. There were no injuries on the fire despite the steep, rocky terrain and the sighting of several rattlesnakes in the area. Cost of the fire exceeded \$1,013,400. Cause of the fire was debris burning.

**Clover Creek Fire**, burned 337 acres on the 15<sup>th</sup>, ten miles west of Klamath Falls in the Klamath-Lake District. Incident Management Team Three was mobilized. Heavy initial attack occurred. The fire was caused by equipment use.

**Booth Fire and Bear Butte Fire**, both fires are USFS and began on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The name of the fire fires was changed to the 'B & B Complex.' Booth Fire was 14 miles west of Sisters and burned parallel to Highway 20 in the Deschutes National Forest near Suttle Lake. Camps and campgrounds were evacuated. The fire jumped Hwy. 20 and a 21-mile stretch of highway was closed near Camp Sherman Junction near Black Butte Ranch to Highway 20-22 junction. The fire burned in mixed conifer, lodgepole pine and beetle-killed timber. Bear Butte Fire burned 1,000 acres, 25 miles northwest of Sisters burning at the north end of Mount Jefferson Wilderness and spread to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation and Deschutes

National Forest. The fire changed course and rapidly burned towards the northeast area. Camp Sherman residents were forced to evacuate the area, but allowed to return over the Labor Day weekend. Fierce winds on the 4<sup>th</sup> drove the massive fire back towards Camp Sherman forcing a second evacuation. The fire was fanned by strong winds and Highway 20 was closed again on September 4th. Total fire size was 90,769 acres.

**Declaration of Emergency** – Gov. Kulongoski declared a state of emergency due to the current wildfire situation. This action enabled ODF to deploy three Oregon National Guard heavy helicopters to the Booth Fire near Sisters. The Booth Fire is part of the B & B Complex, which burned over 36,000 acres.

**Lightning Complex**, burning on the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in northeastern Oregon. Oregon Department of Forestry provided fireline resources, engine crews, and a helicopter. The Complex includes Grouse Creek Fire, Haas Ridge Fire, Butcher Knife Fire, and Two Corral Fire. Total of all the fires has burned 16,028 acres.

**Dedication** of ‘Smith Homestead’ in the Tillamook State Forest took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. After the BBQ lunch, a storyteller performed with a program about the history of the Tillamook, there was walking tours to the Smith homestead site and to the site of the Tillamook Forest Center.

**Bill Hunt**, ODF District Forester of Klamath-Lake District was recognized by the Society of American Foresters (SAF) for his work during the 2002 fire season. Many Oregonians will long remember the 2002 fire season for both its early arrival and its intensity. In Klamath and Lake Counties, 1,000 acres might burn in a normal fire season. In 2002, 35,000 acres went up. Bill is responsible for overseeing all the firefighting efforts on State-protected forestland. The intensity of lightning storms, extremely dry conditions, and the sheer number of new fire starts within a short period of time quickly exhausted available wildland firefighting resources. Bill was quoted as saying, ‘Everyone at the district worked really hard to make our fire effort successful. They were as stressed and stretched as I was, but collectively we did a great job.’ During this marathon of endurance, Bill drove more than 4,000 miles in a two-week period in late July and early August. Bill had to work through the aftermath of rebuilding close working relationships with private forest landowners, and reconciling fire costs, ensuring that the fire bills were paid on time. Congratulations, Bill, and to all the staff and support staff at Klamath-Lake District.

**Eight Oregon firefighters** were killed on the 24<sup>th</sup> on their way home after completing a 14-day work contract on an Idaho wildfire when they collided with a tractor-trailer and exploded into flames. Two were from Portland, two from Myrtle Creek, and four from Roseburg. All the firefighters were employed with First Strike Environmental, a Roseburg-based contract firefighting company.

**The Governor ordered flags to be lowered to half-staff on the 25<sup>th</sup>**, and remain there until sunset on the 26<sup>th</sup> in honor of the eight Oregon firefighters who were killed on the 24<sup>th</sup> in a traffic accident near Vale, Oregon.

## **SEPTEMBER**

MONTH:

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Lightning – 349  
Human Caused – 721

Total Fires – 1,070  
Total Acres – 7,920.45

**Weather:** September began the way summer started – warm and dry. Several periods of cooler weather, including thunderstorms and significant rain occurred later in the month. Generally the month saw above-average temperatures and below-average precipitation.

**Herman Creek Fire**, two miles east of the town of Cascade Locks in Central Oregon District, began on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The fire burned north and south of I-84, which closed to all traffic. An easterly wind quickly pushed the fire to the outskirts of town causing evacuation near that area. The fire burned primarily on USFS and ODOT lands. Union Pacific Railroad suspended all rail traffic through Cascade Locks. Three structures were destroyed in the 370-acre blaze. The fire remained a potential threat to Cascade Locks and the east-end of town was evacuated on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The fire was caused by equipment use, burning 146 state protected acres, with a total of 375 acres.

**In observance** of the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Governor Kulongoski ordered all flags be lowered to half-staff on September 11<sup>th</sup>. In addition, state employees were asked to observe a moment of silence at 12 noon in honor of the lives lost two years ago.

**Craig Loop Fire**, began on the 13<sup>th</sup> burning 45 acres in northeast Oregon near Summerville. For a time the fire threatened several residences in the area. The fire was caused by an escaped illegal debris burn.

**Board Hollow Fire**, 26 miles north of Prineville began on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The fire burned in sage, grass and juniper and burned 150 acres. Cause of the fire was an escaped prescribed burn.

## **OCTOBER**

MONTH:  
Lightning – 352  
Human Caused – 801

YEAR-TO-DATE:  
Total Fires – 1,153  
Total Acres – 8,092.57

**Weather:** October saw some very significant transitions, with cooler temperatures beginning to be observed in many locations in Oregon. There were several very warm periods as well, including a brief heat wave late in the month that saw record-setting temperatures. Generally speaking, the month was drier than an average October.

**On October 14<sup>th</sup>, a Weyerhaeuser Corp. Bell 206B helicopter** struck a power line and crashed into the Siuslaw River. The pilot, Richard Black, and ODF employee Craig Mackey of Western Lane District were both killed. They were surveying for waterhole sites to be used in firefighting. The Governor's Office directed all flags at Oregon State Office buildings to be lowered to half-staff in honor the Craig Mackey. ODF has the discretion to order flags at its own offices to remain lowered for a longer period of time. State Forester Marvin Brown directed that ODF office flags continue to remain at half-staff for an indefinite period of time. Craig began his career with ODF in 1974. He held the Air Attack position on Team 3 and was qualified as an Air Operations



Branch Director. He also served as the Incident Commander during part of the Sulphur Creek Fire in Western Lane District early this summer; Craig was a Type I Fire Investigator.

**Roberts Creek Road Fire** burned seven acres in Douglas County on the 20th. The fire burned grass, brush, re-pod; no structures were threatened. Cause of the fire was debris burning.

**Memorial Fire** burned 20 acres on the 21<sup>st</sup> in Jackson County. The fire was caused by equipment use; fuel type was grass.

**Rice Creek Fire** began on the 23<sup>rd</sup> burning 33 acres of brush and grass in Douglas county. The fire was caused by debris burning.

**Brush Creek Fire** burned nine acres south of Port Orford on the 27th. The fire burned in steep terrain on second growth timber. CFPA trailed the fire and had control in the afternoon. The fire was caused by debris burning.

**A ceremony took place at the Capitol in Salem on the 29<sup>th</sup>.** Governor Kulongoski recognized an Oregon National Guard helicopter crew for a remarkable night rescue of injured firefighters from Hells Canyon in northeastern Oregon this summer. A plaque was presented to the five crewmembers who flew into the steep river canyon during the ‘Lightning Complex’ fires to transport two severely wounded firefighters to medical facilities in Washington. As part of the ceremony, a National Guard medivac helicopter landed on the lawn north of the Capitol Building. The helicopter crew and an ODF staff member were available to answer questions about rescue missions and the Guard’s role in wildland firefighting.

**California wildfires** raged out of control by the Santa Ana winds in October and November. Oregon Department of Forestry personnel, Oregon National Guard, and private contract firefighting resources and personnel were sent to California to assist in their efforts.

**NOVEMBER**

MONTH:

Lightning - 352

Human Caused – 821

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 1,173

Total Acres – 8,619.04

**Weather:** November began with very cold temperatures, as an early-season Arctic outbreak dropped into the U.S. from Canada. Some daily record low temperature records were set, especially in eastern Oregon. In the last week of the month, wet, mild weather prevailed, but generally rainfall was below normal for the month, while monthly temperatures were below normal statewide.

**Cold Hope Fire** burned 50 acres on the 6th in the Cascade District. The fire was caused by debris burning.

**Lower Simmons Fire** burned 10 acres near Tillamook on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The fire was caused by a slash burn slop-over.

**Milepost 230 Fire** burned 1,500 acres 12 miles east of Pendleton on Bureau of Indian Affairs land and private lands on the 19th. The railroad caused fire was fought by ODF and BIA resources, and two rural fire departments, burning chiefly in grass on steep, rough terrain, the fire was driven by strong winds of 30-37 mph.

**Sterling Ditch Fire** burned 40 acres near Little Applegate in Southwest Oregon District on the 19th. The fire was an escaped prescribed burn that got away with winds blowing embers ahead of the main fire perimeter, igniting spot fires and burning onto Bureau of Land Management land.

**The Oregon Tree Farm System, Inc.** announced the states 'Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year 2003' at an awards banquet held at the World Forestry Center in Portland on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Chris and Donna Hefferman earned the title for sustainable management of North Slope Natural Resources, their tree farm located ten miles west of North Powder, Oregon. The Hefferman's use an integrated approach that consists of managing their land for timber, water, wildlife, recreation and grazing. Their objective is to maintain a healthy, sustainable forest that provides social, economic and environmental benefits for their family and community, now and in the future. Besides reforestation and pre-commercial thinning to control insects and dwarf mistletoe, forest management activities on the tree farm include the development of three ponds for fire suppression and wildlife, as well as riparian restoration. Oregon joined the Tree Farm System in 1941 and has selected an Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year every year since 1966.

## **DECEMBER**

### **MONTH:**

Lightning – 352

Human Caused – 822

### **YEAR-TO-DATE:**

Total Fires – 1,174

Total Acres – 8,619.05

**Weather:** December was a wet month in nearly all of Oregon (the only exceptions being a few locations in northern sections of the state). As is often the case during wet months, the average monthly temperatures were mostly above normal. A snow storm with very cold weather affected much of the state in the last week of the month.

**The National Society of American Foresters** has voted to bestow the honor of 'Fellow Forester' in 2003 to Tom Scoggins, Sunset Unit Forester in the Astoria District. It is bestowed upon foresters that have displayed exemplary service to the Society of American Foresters, the forestry profession, their country, and their local community. It is a noble achievement to be so recognized by one's national professional peer group.

**South Fork Forest Camp** in Tillamook reported crews responded to 28 fires during fire season. Three were statewide and 25 were within the Northwest Oregon Area. Of those, the majority were in the Cascade District on 14 fires. Crews camped out at the Sweet Home compound on two deployments and district staff did a great job of keeping the crews fed, showered and laundered. Crews responded to five fires each in Forest Grove and Astoria Districts and one fire in Tillamook District. Fire Training involved the equivalent of 64 crew days with nearly 240 inmate fire fighters certified. During the annual Fire School in June, South Fork was joined by a squad of State Forest employees from the Tillamook District. Once again, neighboring districts provided excellent instructors. Reforestation crews treated more than 7,000 acres of young stands, and

recreation crews built five miles of hiking trail, maintained 15 miles of trail and 17 recreation facilities within NWOA.

**Oregon Department of Forestry Employees Answer the Call of Duty:** In 2003, several ODF employees stepped up to the plate to serve their country in Iraq and elsewhere. **Steve Wetmore**, a Stewardship Forester from Grants Pass Unit was called into active duty with the Army Reserves and served nine months in Fort Lewis, Washington. Steve ran the Engineer Operation Center. The training he provided was needed for individuals to learn the skills necessary to serve in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in the US for homeland defense. **Casey Potts**, a Seasonal Laborer from the Santiam Unit, served on active duty stateside with the 1249<sup>th</sup> Engineers, Oregon National Guard. His duties included construction and maintenance, and he spent part of the time at Fort Lewis, Washington, as well as the Umatilla Army Depot. **Jeff Gonzales** works as a Seasonal Forest Fire Lookout in the Klamath-Lake District. Jeff was in Iraq with the National Guard out of Klamath Falls. Prior to that he was stationed in Texas. Gonzales' cooking skills are in demand overseas. **Joseph Lynch** is a Forester with State Lands in Veneta. He is a 14-year member of the National Guard's B-52 Engineering Battalion of Albany, he spent nine months in Iraq working to improve living conditions for the other troops. The camp trained local Iraqis in American building techniques. **Ron Zilli** is Assistant District Forester in Astoria. Ron was called to active duty for 11 months making this his second tour of duty in the past three years. He served with the Navy Reserves Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare Unit and was stationed in Kuwait, where he was responsible for sea port security and coordinating training for Navy personnel. Ron was a Management Unit Forester in Astoria when he was activated for military duty, but successfully completed for the ADF position in a phone interview from a tent in Kuwait. Ron started his new job when he returned to Astoria. **Benjamin Duda** is a Seasonal Officer in at the Santiam Unit. He served 14 months on active duty with the Oregon National Guard, Bravo Company, 1-162 Infantry Battalion, 41<sup>st</sup> Brigade. He was stationed in both Kuwait and Iraq. In Kuwait he was responsible for seaport security, and in Iraq he was in the south end of Baghdad where he performed patrol and security duties. **Harold Gilpin**, Forest Officer with Douglas Forest Protective Association for 12 years was sent to Iraq. Harold serves with the Oregon National Guard and will spend a year in Iraq. We are proud of all of you.